(d) All the proposals for conversion of State Highways into National Highways have been .returned to the respective State Governments including Orissa and Chhattisgarh in June, 2002 for review based on the revised criteria for declaration of new National Highways. Presently there is a ban on declaration of new National Highways due to fund constraints. The Government may, however, cosider conversion of very limited lengths of a few State Highways into National Highways during the course of the 10th Five Year Plan, keeping in view the traffic needs, interse priority and availability of funds, after the ban is lifted.

SSIs in Assam

311. SHRI DWIJENDRA NATH SHARMA: Will the Minister of SMALL SCALE INDUSTRIES be pleased to state:

(a) the progress of the integrated infrastructure development works for small scale industries, in rural areas of Assam; and

(b) the effective steps proposed to be taken by Government for effective implementation of the plan formulated for small scale industries in the State?

THE MINISTER OF SMALL SCALE INDUSTRIES (DR. C. P. THAKUR) (a) On the request of the Government of Assam, four projects under Integrated Infrastructural Development (IID) Scheme located at Bhomoraguri, district Nagaon, Dalagon, district Darrang, Malini Beel, District Cachar and Demow, District Sibsagar, have ben sanctioned. Funding pattern for setting up IID Centres in Assam provides for central grant of 80% of the project cost with a maximum of Rs. 4.00 crore for each IID Centre. Central grant of Rs. 5.00 crore has been released to the Assam Industrial Development Corporation, the Implementing Agency for these projectsaThe work relating to the creation of the integrated infrastructure for these centres is making steady progress as per the available reports.

(b) In order to facilitate establishment of small scale industries in the State of Assam, the Central Government had set up the Small Industries Service Institute at Guwahati with branches at Silcfaier and Tezpur under the Small Industries Development Organisation. These Institutes organise training programmes for Skill/Entrepreneurship/Management Development, carry out motivational campaigns throughout the State, provide techno-

managerial guidance, consultancy, supply project profiles, conduct various economic surveys, potential surveys, provide extension services and common facilities for small scale and also disseminate all kinds of data and information relating to exports and indigenous market situations, and all other schemes/projects/programmes launched by Government from time to time. Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship has been set up at Guwahati to cater to local needs. ATool Room andTraining Centre is also being set up at Guwahati at an estimated cost of Rs. 13.28 crore, to design and manufacture tools, dies and jigs, Fixtures, etc., impart training in these areas and introduce CAD/CAM to facilitate manufacture of tools. National Small Industries Corporation is having a Regional Office and a Demonstration-cum-Training Centre at Guwahati to promote and support the SSI units in Assam. It also supplies indigenous and imported machines under its hire-purchase and equipment leasing scheme, provides marketing support and raw material assistance, enlists small scale units for government supply, conducts training programmes etc.

Hurdles faced by SSIs

312. SHRI H. K. JAVARE GOWDA: Will the Minister of SMALL SCALE INDUSTRIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the small and medium industries in the country are facing heavy burden of untenable constraints and hurdles in promoting their business;

(b) whether the interest rates offered is more for small industry than the housing loans; and

(c) if so, the details of the steps Government proposed to take to promote the small scale industries in the country?

THE MINISTER OF SMALL SCALE INDUSTRIES (DR. C. P. THAKUR): (a) The small and medium industries face the problems of inadequate availability and high cost of credit, inadequate infrastructure, marketing bottlenecks,, obsolete technology, and enhanced competition due to globalization, W.T.O. and removal of Quantitative Restrictions.etc.

(b) As per the Reserve Bank of India, some banks are extending housing loans at an interest rate lower than Prime Lending Rate (PLR).